

To: Massachusetts Division of Telecommunications and Energy,
Cable Television Division

From: Mitch Cohen, Douglas Board of Selectmen and Cable Advisory Committee

August 16, 2006

Written testimony on CTV 06-01 (Verizon petition)

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CABLE TELEVISION DIVISION

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you this morning. Per your request, this is a written version of my testimony before you regarding the Verizon petition, CTV 06-1

My name is Mitch Cohen, and I appear before you as both an elected member of the Douglas Board of Selectmen and as a member of the Douglas Cable Advisory Committee. I know you have received our letter dated June 6, 2006, signed by all five members of the Board of Selectmen, opposing the petition under discussion today.

Instead of reiterating the points in our letter I want to share with you how the proposed petition would, if enacted, impact our town.


Small towns such as Douglas rely on volunteers for policy-making decisions. A 30-day limitation from a public hearing to a final decision on license application is entirely inconsistent with the needs of a majority of municipalities in the Commonwealth. A defined limitation would result in agreements which are rushed, and thus poorly representative of the community's needs.

I would welcome competition from Verizon or any other applicants interested in honest competition within our community. If lower prices would result from the competition, and services such as PEG access would be improved, the existing contract negotiation framework would continue working well for our community. A rushed process only meets the interests of Verizon - not the public.

Verizon's speedy intent to compete with an incumbent provider under a similar contract assumes the existing contract is a good contract for the community. Often this is not the case. We have experienced this firsthand, negotiating a good contract as a renewal to one that did not meet the current needs of the town. Negotiating a proper contract, whether primary or not, can and should be done carefully - not rushed.

True competition means an even playing field. Verizon claims that due to its existing infrastructure it should receive preferential treatment. This would not result in an even playing field. Potential competitors without existing infrastructure would be at a competitive disadvantage under the proposed regulations, limiting true competition.

The petition before you is remarkably unfair and improper for the Town of Douglas. On



behalf of the Douglas Board of Selectmen I urge the Department to deny the petition under consideration.

Thank you very much.

